

To the members of the Connecticut Education Committee:

I am asking you to support SB948, an act addressing education funding and racial equity in the state of Connecticut.

I have been a social worker for the last 28 years. I have worked with children and families in poorest sections of cities and the most wealthy areas of towns. Education is what makes the difference between families doing well for themselves and being independent of the need for government assistance and families who are dependent on many town and states services. When a school system does not put sufficient resources into the education of the children it may save some money in the short term but in the long term it will cost the state. This is especially true in communities where there are cultures and ethnicities who do not receive the same education as a child in a mostly white school. The teachers are not often paid as much as they would in an affluent school system. As a result a child of color is more likely going to give up on their education because they can sense their educational system does not put much faith in them as students. These children are more likely not going to put much effort into their education because they feel the teachers and school system does not think they can do well. The student will feel why should they care if no one else does. They are more likely to drop out of school, engage in illegal activities or engage in sexual activities. They may become pregnant at such a young age or become dependent on drugs or alcohol. They are more likely to engage in self harm or go to prison for the activities they have been doing since they drop out of schools.

In my line of work, children of color are over represented in the human services field. They are more likely to be referred to the Department of Children and Families. DCF Hotline gets their most calls in March about children not attending school. By this point in time, many of the children have missed more than half of the school year. The student is not able to get caught up educationally.

I am working in my private life to have Rocky Hill become a town where ALL children are respected no matter their race, color, or creed. I was told in the past, years ago, there was a teacher of color in the schools. Since February 2020, I have been working to make changes in the town. I am advocating, with several faiths, action community groups, elected leaders (both Democrats and Republicans) to ensure our town becomes more diverse. I am a parent of three children, 1 who is white and 2 who are children of color. My white child has had teachers who look like her. She has learned much about the Western Civilization. My two younger children, in grades 5th and 4th, have not had teachers who look like them. They have had little exposure outside of the learning of white individuals. They have learned about Martin Luther King Jr. They learn about him around his birthday. They have not learned much about black historical figure, arts, and communities they can relate to. When I met with the Superintendent in town, I was told I could not have any supports with me when I went to the meeting. When I arrived, there were two individuals present, the Superintendent and the Chair of Curriculum. There were books set up for me to see on the table. The books had people of color on them, as well as black fictional characters. I asked if these books were in the classroom and if the class learned the information in the books. I was told, the books were from the library and if any student requested the books, they could

take them out of the library. I asked how many teachers were in the classroom. I was told the after school program had staff of color. I was told the reason there were not teachers of color was because individuals of color do not normally apply for positions as teachers. I was also told by the superintendent the school system does not tolerate "bullying". I said that was great but "bullying" was not what I was there to talk about. I was there to talk about inclusiveness and equity.

I have held calls with individuals in the community to address the racial inequality in the schools. One of the virtual meeting included students and their parents. They informed me that the children often went to school feeling they would be hurt. They felt excluded from school groups. One parent talked about her child being threatened by a knife. When the parents told the administration, problems became worse for the child. They felt staff was not invested in them. They felt laughed at.

As a result of the above, I am asking for the CT legislature to approve SNB 948 and help in making Connecticut schools better for all students and not just where families who have the nicest zip codes receive the best education at the expense of others.

Thanks for your time and consideration in this matter.

Brian Donahue
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